



Southeast New Mexico Fire Prevention Team

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STAGE III FIRE RESTRICTIONS AND CLOSURE ORDER ON LINCOLN NATIONAL FOREST AND FORT STANTON EFFECTIVE MAY 2, 2006

Alamogordo, NM (April 26, 2006) – “The Lincoln National Forest is very dry and the grasses and other fine fuels are very susceptible to fire,” said Lou Woltering, Acting Forest Supervisor. “The Stage III closures are being implemented to reduce the threat of human-caused fires during this period of extreme fire danger.”

The Lincoln National Forest closure order signed by Lou Woltering will go into effect May 2, 2006, at 8:00 a.m.

EXEMPTIONS: Persons visiting the following developed areas.

- **Smokey Bear Ranger District:** Sam Tobias 1–3 Campground, Cedar Creek Picnic Grounds, Pavilion and Fitness Trail
- **Sacramento Ranger District:** Silver, Silver Overflow, Saddle, Apache, Pines, Upper and Lower Fir, Sleepygrass, Deerhead Campgrounds and the Trestle Recreation Area
- Persons occupying permitted summer homes

The Smokey Bear and Sacramento Ranger Districts authorize the use of petroleum fueled stoves and lanterns or heating devices because these devices are not considered fires, provided such devices meet the Fire Underwriter’s specifications for safety in the picnic areas and concessionaire campgrounds only.

Violations of these prohibitions are punishable by a fine of not more than \$5,000 for an individual and \$10,000 for an organization, or imprisonment for not more than six months or both. 16 USC 551 and 18 USC 3559 and 3571.

Fort Stanton Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) will be closed to visitors.

EXEMPTIONS: Only the following exemptions are allowed for this special order as authorized by 43 CFR 9213.3(a)

Only the Fort Stanton Cave Road will remain open for the following specific purposes:

- Persons with valid Fort Stanton Cave Permits, only for the specific dates of the permit.
- The Fort Stanton Cave Campground will be only open for day use only during the valid dates of the cave permit (No overnight camping will be allowed).
- The Fort Stanton Cave Road and Road leading to the Merchant Marine Cemetery will be open to the Lincoln County Overland Stage under special recreation permit number NM-060-02-11.

- The parking area adjacent to U.S. Highway 380 on the Fort Stanton Cave Road will be open only to visitors who are awaiting a ride with the Lincoln County Overland Stage. The Horse Trails parking area adjacent to NM Highway 220 will also remain open to the public.

All other lands within the Fort Stanton ACEC will remain closed.

“Public safety is our top concern right now. We believe that closing Fort Stanton ACEC will reduce the risk of a human caused fire from starting,” said Chuck Schmidt, Fire Management Officer for the BLM Roswell Field Office.

“The Lincoln National Forest has reviewed the situation and received feedback from the communities located within the Forest. We take these actions to protect our neighbors, maintain a healthy forest and most importantly, the public’s safety,” said Paul Schmidtke, Fire Management Staff Officer, Lincoln National Forest.

The Village of Cloudcroft, Ruidoso, Mayhill, Sacramento, Weed, Timberon, Capitan and Queen are still open for business and we encourage visitors come and enjoy what our mountain has to offer.

The area closures do not affect Federal and State Highways that lead into the mountain communities. Property owners and their guests will continue to have access to private lands within the Forest.

PLEASE NOTE: If conditions change for the worse or there is significant fire activity it may be necessary to close the forest completely before the May 2nd date.

As a reminder, all persons allowed within the restricted area are required to follow the Stage II Fire Restriction order signed and effective April 20, 2006, on the Lincoln National Forest, which prohibits the following:

- Building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, campfire, charcoal, broiler, coal, or wood stove fire
- Smoking
- Using an explosive (including fireworks)
- Operating a chainsaw, or other equipment powered by an internal combustion engine, is prohibited from 10:00 am to 1:00 am
- Operating or using any internal or external combustion engine without a spark arresting device properly installed, maintained, and in effective working order.
- Welding or operating acetylene or other torch with open flame
- Possessing or using a motor vehicle off National Forest System roads, except when parking in an area devoid of vegetation within 10 feet of the roadway; and except for parking overnight in developed campgrounds.

For more information on current fire restrictions on public lands in the Southwest, call **1-877-864-6985**. This is a toll-free hotline sponsored by natural resource agencies in the Southwest. Please visit our website: Southwest Area Wildland Fire Operations at <http://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/>.

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